



## How many sessions will we need?

Wherever possible, decisions about the number of sessions and the intervals between appointments are made collaboratively between the therapist and family. The number of appointments offered will depend on the service setting and family members' needs. Most sessions last between 45 minutes and one and a half hours.

## Do family therapists only work with families?

No. They may see children and adults individually and/or in family member groups. They may work with couples, or with other groups and communities. When a family is involved with several different agencies, family therapists may work with the network of professionals as well as with family members to ensure their input is co-ordinated and helpful. Some systemic psychotherapists use their understandings of relationships to work with organisations. Many use their skills in family-sensitive working to supervise other professionals.

## What's meant by 'family'?

Family therapists recognise that different cultures and groups have different ideas of what 'family' means. They take 'family' to describe any group of people who care about each other and define themselves as such. As well as parents and children of all ages, they may work with grandparents, siblings, uncles and aunts, cousins, friends, carers, other professionals – whoever people identify as important to their lives.

## How do I find a Family Therapist?

Start by asking your GP, health visitor or other health or social care professional. They may arrange for you to see a GP-based family therapist if one is available or, if appropriate, refer you to another family therapy service.

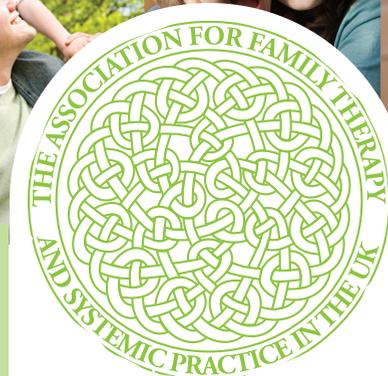
These may be found in local health and social care services, and in specialist services such as those for looked after children, and for families affected by substance misuse.

Some services accept self-referrals from families seeking help, as well as referrals from GPs and other professionals. See directory enquiries or ask your GP's surgery for contact details. Some voluntary and independent organisations employ Family Therapists. Many Family Therapists also work in private practice.

Only fully qualified family therapists are eligible to register as accredited Family and Systemic Psychotherapists with the United Kingdom Council for Psychotherapy (UKCP). For details of accredited Family and Systemic Psychotherapists working independently in your area, call 020 7014 9955 or visit the UKCP website at [www.psychotherapy.org.uk](http://www.psychotherapy.org.uk).

**For more information about Family Therapy and finding a Family Therapist, please contact the Association for Family Therapy and Systemic Practice (AFT) on 01925 444414 or visit its website at [www.aft.org.uk](http://www.aft.org.uk)**

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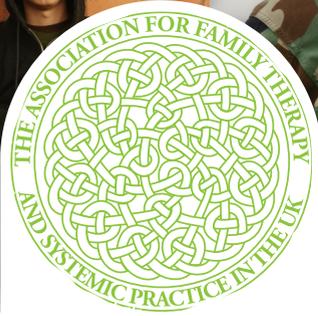


# AFT

*building  
family  
strengths*

# What is Family Therapy?

[www.aft.org.uk](http://www.aft.org.uk)



# AFT *building family strengths*

**Most families experience serious difficulties sometimes. If it feels like family relationships are suffering, if you're no longer sure what to do for the best or family members seem stuck in repeating patterns of hurtful or harmful behaviour, Family Therapy may help.**

## What is Family Therapy?

Families are small and unique communities. Like all communities they sometimes get into difficulties through their differences with one another, or feel the strain when members experience troubles.

Family and Systemic Psychotherapy – often called Family Therapy - helps people in close relationship help each other. It enables family members to express and explore difficult thoughts and emotions safely, to understand each other's experiences and views, appreciate each other's needs, build on family strengths and make useful changes in their relationships and their lives.

Sometimes it doesn't take much to help a family free up their strengths; sometimes difficulties are more complex and families may need longer to find solutions that work for them.

## How might it help me and my family?

Research shows Family Therapy is useful for children, young people and adults experiencing a wide range of difficulties and circumstances, as well as relationship problems. These include:

- Family communication problems
- Child and adolescent behaviour difficulties
- Mental health problems
- Couple relationship difficulties
- Illness and disability in the family
- Separation, divorce and step-family life
- Anorexia, bulimia and other eating disorders
- Fostering, adoption, kinship care and the needs of 'looked after' children
- Domestic violence
- Self-harm
- Drug and alcohol misuse
- The effects of trauma
- Difficulties related to ageing

## What happens in family therapy?

Family and Systemic Psychotherapists are highly skilled professionals, trained to work with children, young people, adults, carers and other professionals.

Their aim is not to take sides, blame, or provide simple answers. Rather, they aim to engage family members in sharing understandings and exploring ways forward that work for them.

Some Family Therapists work in teams or in partnership with colleagues. Others work as individual therapists.

Family Therapists acknowledge the importance of peoples' different beliefs, cultures, contexts and life experiences, and will adapt their ways of working according to family members' ages, needs, resources and preferences. Sessions involving children, for example, will often include play and drawing. The Family Therapist will discuss with you and your family how you might wish to work together.